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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 002146

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DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PRESIDENT DISMISSES 20
MINISTERS/MINISTERS OF STATE

REF: ABUJA 1986

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Late on October 29, President Yar'Adua announced the dismissal of 9 Ministers and eleven Ministers of State, believed to be the first step in his long-awaited Cabinet reshuffle (reftel). The Ministers of Commerce, National Planning, Mines and Steel Development, Air Transport, Education, Environment, Federal Capital Territory, Women's Affairs, and Sport were among those removed, as well as Ministers of State for Commerce, Energy (Power), Energy (Gas), and Foreign Affairs. Among those who were notably unaffected by the dismissals are the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Justice and Labor, as well as the Minister of State for Energy (Petroleum). The list of new Ministerial nominees to replace those dismissed has not yet been released. Home-state politics appears to have been behind at least some of the dismissals. We will need to work hard to ensure continuity of some of the economic initiatives on which we have been working, particularly regarding our efforts to secure a BIT and a TIFA. The complete list of those dismissed and those placed in acting capacity are provided in paras 5 and 6. END SUMMARY.

PROCESS TO NAME NEW MINISTERS

¶2. Section 147 of the Nigerian Constitution requires that Ministers be nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. At least one Minister must be appointed from each state, in accordance with Section 14(3), which stipulates that assignments to public office must reflect the federal character of Nigeria. In recent practice, the President has made his nominations in close consultation with governors and senior leaders of the respective states. The list of Ministerial nominees sent forward to the Senate for confirmation is not required to indicate to which Ministry the nominee will be assigned, and in practice such information is not made available until after confirmation. Minister of States are Ministers by legal definition, with the differentiation made only within the executive for the purpose of portfolio assignments. (Comment: Because of the

Constitutional requirement of "Federal Character" the state from which the dismissed Minister comes is of particular importance. The new list of ministerial nominees will have to contain individuals from the same states as those dismissed, although they will not necessarily be assigned to the same ministry. End Comment.)

INITIAL ANALYSIS OF THE DISMISSALS

13. (C) Comment. Post's initial impressions of the dismissals is that politics in the Ministers' home states appears to have played a large role in many of them. In several cases, we note disagreements between the Minister and the "godfather" (the common term here for the head of one of the patron-client networks which are at the heart of Nigerian politics) who helped put him in office, or a falling out with the serving state governor. In particular, the Ministers of Commerce, Education, the Federal Capital Territory, and Mines and Steel Development were enmeshed in battles with personalities within their states. As well, Yar'Adua targeted the Ministers of State for Energy charged with the Power and Gas portfolios, likely in response to their inability to address the ongoing power crisis in the nation.

14. (C) Comment Continued. We are pleased to note that ForMin Maduekwe has been retained, as we have developed a good working relationship with him. On the other hand, Justice Minister and Attorney General Aondoakaa has also held onto his job, so our difficulties with him on the corruption front will continue. On the economic side, we will have to work

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hard to ensure continuity of bilateral initiatives we established with those ministers who were let go yesterday. Minister of Commerce and Industry Ugwu had been involved in consideration of a bilateral investment treaty (BIT) and USTR had been looking to engage with Ugwu to plan for a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council Meeting in Washington shortly after the new year. Fortunately, Chief Economic Advisor Yukubu, who is close to the President and remains in place, is also engaged in consideration of a BIT based on the U.S. Model Agreement. The USG Team has been very active with recent promotions designed to support additional non-oil exports under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and we will need early engagement with the new Commerce and Industry leadership to ensure the GON is fully engaged to create new momentum for AGOA. We have been increasingly involved with MOS for Power Ibrahim and MOS for Gas Odisina to support policies that accelerate public and private investment to meet the electric power challenge, including for domestic supplies of natural gas. We have been engaged on civil aviation as well, but MOS Hyatt was not so personally involved in those efforts and we should be able to continue working through senior Aviation Ministry staff and the heads of the responsible subagencies. MOS for Finance Babalola has been a close and useful contact and may leave a temporary gap for our purposes if he is assigned permanently to the FCT. Ambassador and USG Team Nigeria will engage with new ministers as soon as possible after they are named. End Comment.

15. (U) Ministers dismissed and those who will serve in an acting capacity until new Ministers are named:

- Minister of Commerce Charles Ugwu (Imo State)
(Aliyu Idi Hong, Minister of State for Culture and Tourism, appointed acting)
- Minister/Vice Chairman for National Planning Mohammed Sanusi Daggash (Borno State)
(Elder Godsdan Orubebe, Minister of Special Duties, appointed acting)
- Minister of Mines and Steel Development Sarafa Tunji Isola (Ogun State)
(Demola Seriki, Minister of State for Agriculture and Water

Resources, appointed acting)

- Minister of Air Transport Felix Hyat (Kaduna State)
- Minister of Education Igwe Aja-Nwachukwu (Ebonyi State)
- Minister of Environment Halima Tayo Alao (Kwara State)
- Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Aliyu Moddibo (Gombe State)
(Remi Babalola, Minister of State for Finance, appointed acting)
- Saudautu Usman Bungudu, Minister of Women's Affairs (Zamfara State)
(Grace Ekpiwhre, Minister of Science and Technology, appointed acting)
- Minister of Sports/National Sports Commission Abdurahman Gimba (Niger State)
(Alhassan Bako Zaku, Minister of State for Science and Technology, appointed acting)

¶6. (U) Ministers of State dismissed:

- Minister of State for Commerce Ahmed Garba Bichi (Kano State)
- Minister of State for Energy (Power) Fatima Balaraba Ibrahim (Kebbi State)
- Minister of State for Energy (Gas) Emmanuel Olatunde

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Odusina (Ekiti State)

- Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Tijani Yahaya Kaura (Zamfara State)
- Minister of State for Transport John Okechukwu Emeka (Anambra State)
- Minister of State for Agriculture and Water Resources Adamu Maina Waziri (Yobe State)
- Minister of State for Education Jerry Agada (Benue State)
- Minister of State for Mines and Steel Development Ahmed Mohammed Gusau (Sokoto State)
- Minister of State for the FCT John James Akpanudoedehe (Akwa Ibom State)
- Minister of State for Information and Communication Ibrahim Dasuki Nakande (Plateau State)
- Minister of State for Interior Haruna Hassan (Jigawa State)

¶7. (U) This cable coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
Sanders